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AMERICA AND THE VATICAN.

IN March, 1884, the American Legation at Rome was cabled by the late Secretary of State Frelinghuysen to use every proper exertion on behalf of the Roman Propaganda to prevent the forced sale of one of its dependencies called the American College.

The secularizing of ecclesiastical property, in the conversion of monasteries and church lands to public uses, had been going on in all the provinces of Italy, excepting Rome, since 1862, under laws passed in 1861 and enlarged in 1867. In 1873 the operation of these laws was applied to the last fragment of the late temporal States of the Church. The constitutionality of these laws had been contested for ten years by the Propaganda before successive tribunals. The court of final appeal had recently rendered a decision ordering the enforcement of the law upon the property of the Propaganda. In substance, the laws passed by the Italian National Parliament provided for the conversion of lands belonging to the Roman Church in Italy into securities for the Italian government—an effective method of enlisting the pecuniary interest of an irreconcilable enemy in its permanence.

During the period of years from 1862 to 1884, no interposition had ever been made to prevent the “spoliation” of the church. Once only, and mainly at the instance of Mr. Gladstone’s government, had a mild remonstrance been made by several European states to preserve the beautiful Neapolitan Monastery of Monte Casino. The considerations urged were its antiquity, its architectural interest, and its historic value to travelers of all nations. As an amicable concession to the public opinion which prompted this species of archæological argument, Monte Casino has been left unmolested. But this was a voluntary concession, and not a recognition of any right; and the sensitiveness of both the Italian government and people in treating their conflict with the Vatican as

an internal question, in which none other had a word to say, had long made it apparent that any further interposition would be received with great disfavor. And when, in 1883, the British College of the Propaganda became threatened with "conversion," the British ambassador, Sir Augustus Paget, avowed his inability to interpose.

It was therefore with no sanguine anticipations that I presented myself to Signor Mancini, at that time Minister of Foreign Affairs. My personal relations with him were such as to obtain a courteous hearing of even so unwelcome a communication as that of the American government.

The first point to be attained was to "get the case into court"—to secure a hearing of the reasons which might be presented for exempting the College. In approaching the question, I treated it exclusively as one involving *American* property, and not at all as an interposition in favor of the Propaganda. I presented to him the claim to the title to the College as stated by those of the American Roman Catholic clergy who had first urged the subject upon the United States government: this, although vested in the Propaganda by Pius IX., as a gift upon the condition of a perpetual use for the training of priests for service in the United States, was claimed by the Catholic Church in America as property of the American people, on the ground that large sums had been from time to time contributed by American Catholic congregations, for the repair of the original building, for its maintenance for a period of a dozen years, and for the establishment in it of a library.

Signor Mancini admitted these rather unsubstantial claims to a title, and appointed an afternoon when he desired me to bring all the papers bearing upon the subject, when he would consider the matter fully, and see whether, as he expressed it, "*si può trovar un modo*"—a way can be found.

The Propaganda, apprised of the instruction of the Washington authorities, sent to the Legation a quantity of documents, and Monsignor Jacobini, Secretary of the Propaganda, the Vice-Rector of the American College, and the lawyer who had unsuccessfully contested the case before the Court of Appeals, recounted the successive phases of the legal defense to that time. Despite their recent defeat, these gentlemen were considerably elated at having transferred at least a portion of the question at issue to the channel of diplomacy, and declared success to be of extreme impor-

tance, as establishing a precedent of exemption upon which a claim for further concessions might later be based.

I became acquainted at this time with an English gentleman, who discharged with rare discretion the office of confidential diplomatic agent of the British government to the Vatican. In proof of the interest with which the solution of the pending negotiation was awaited, he told me that he had conferred with the representatives to the Vatican of the countries similarly interested, and that two of them were ready to support the government of the United States in making a protest. At the stage which the negotiations had then reached, and bearing as it did the character of an amicable request rather than that of an interposition, this action would evidently have done more harm than good. I therefore decided to proceed alone, while preparing, should the request of the American government prove insufficient, to propose to the representatives of several European powers at the Vatican Court to unite in a combined remonstrance, to save all those dependencies of the Propaganda which bear the names of the nationalities by which they have been founded or supported. Remembering the estrangements that characterized the last years of the reign of Pius IX., I was impressed during the incident with the improved relations which his successor has brought about, not only with the ultra-Catholic states of Austria and Spain, but with France and Germany, and, through confidential agents, with Great Britain and Russia.

In my second interview with Signor Mancini, I adhered to the first position of treating an American, not an Italian question. The following is an outline of the arguments which I presented to him at some length.

First, the consideration of equity : that the College had been given to the Propaganda by Pope Pius IX. years before the national occupation of Rome ; that it had been received with the intention of a perpetual use ; that upon the faith of this gift considerable sums had been expended upon it by American Catholics. Second, that as it was not intended, under the law, to sell the Propaganda itself, but only its property—such as leased houses and vineyards and farms—so, any building used for the purposes of the Propaganda, and subject to its discipline, should be regarded as materially part of the Propaganda, whether isolated or actually contiguous. And, lastly, I urged the favorable impression that such an act

of generosity would produce in the hearts of millions of American Catholics. The arguments which had served in the long defense before the Court of Appeals related to all the property of the Propaganda collectively, and were inapplicable specifically to the American College; and the documents were of little service beyond establishing the title, which was not in dispute, and as showing that the College had been largely supported by contributions from the United States, which was also conceded.

Signor Mancini showed an evident willingness to exempt the College, could a sufficient reason be found for so doing. "*Faremo tutto il nostro possibile per contentar' gli Americani*," he laughingly remarked. The consideration of the "use" chiefly weighed with him, and he asked in connection with it whether I could obtain from the Propaganda a guaranty that, if exempted, the College should never be converted to any other purpose. This I engaged to do if required. On communicating this stipulation to the Propaganda authorities, it was at once assented to—perforce, perhaps; but as it was never reverted to by Signor Mancini, the obligation was not formally assumed.

In conclusion, Signor Mancini said that he would confer upon the subject with his colleague in the Cabinet, the Minister of Justice, in whose province the question lay, and it was also considered on the following Tuesday morning, at the usual Cabinet meeting over which the King presides. I doubted not that we should now advance through lengthy stages to a stay of proceedings in the proposed sale. I was greatly surprised and delighted when, calling at my residence a few days later, Signor Mancini showed me a letter from the Minister of Justice, stating that the reasons communicated were deemed sufficient to justify the exemption; but the letter was dated prior to my interview with Signor Mancini, that the concession might stand as one spontaneously made, and not in response to any influence or pressure. I immediately cabled the substance of this disposition to the State Department, and communicated it to the Propaganda.

At Washington so prompt a solution was unlooked for. The Italian Minister had verbally assured the State Department that his government would NEVER listen even to the statement of the case—would not even hear the question asked through the diplomatic channel whether the College might be spared. Possibly his declaration might have been justified had there been the semblance

of an intervention in Italian affairs, under the guise of an intercession in favor of the Propaganda. The State Department replied to me, "Your course in Propaganda matter is commended. Express President's thanks to Italian government.—Frelinghuysen."

The establishment by the Italian government of a precedent against itself attracted comment in the diplomatic corps at Rome, and to my amusement a number of my colleagues called to inquire, for the information of their respective governments, how this result had been obtained, as though some trick of sleight of hand had been performed. I invariably answered, after stating the considerations urged, that it had been the voluntary concession of the Italian government, induced solely by equity and by sentiments of national amity towards the American people.

Unfortunately, three weeks later Signor Mancini received from his representative at Washington cuttings from American Roman Catholic newspapers, wherein the concession was described as having been made under menace, together with injurious expressions relative to the "spoliation" of the church, and rejoicings that at length "the usurping House of Savoy" had been ordered to halt. It was difficult to palliate the offensiveness of these publications to Signor Mancini. "This is my return," he said, "for a voluntary act of kindness. The Mayor of Brooklyn holds a mass meeting at which resolutions denouncing the Italian government are adopted. Your clerical papers are allowed to publish that the exemption was made under a threat of war." I could only suggest to him that the United States government is not responsible for newspaper utterances, nor for resolutions adopted at a mass meeting. He conceded this point so far as concerned the intention of the government. "But," said he, laying his hand upon a particularly venomous article, which predicted that the "interposition" of the United States was but the prelude to such a crusade the world over as should restore to the Pope his own, "I tell you, that if ever it comes to more than words for the possession of Rome, which is the keystone of Italian unity, I, who am an old man, and thousands like me, will go out with a rifle with the young volunteers, and fight to maintain what has been achieved."

WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR.